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Washington University in St. Louis
Graduate School of Art
Spring 2021

Art and Empathy: Self Discovery in a Dark Forest

By
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A thesis presentation presented to the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts Washington University in
St. Louis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

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Introduction

I feel anxiety, anxiety that everything I love will disappear, I will be alone, and I will not belong to society. My anxiety is genuine. But I want to pretend I don't have any anxiety at all. I might want to live without anxiety, but if I want to live that life, I have to do things that cause my anxiety despite already being nervous. To keep doing things that make me nervous is my habit, and I can do it really well now.

<Artist note, 11. 30. 2020>

Human emotions are neither fixed nor obvious. My feelings are abstract and complex, and emotions dominate my relationships, my life, and my body. Furthermore, emotions in my daily life are sometimes transient and easy to forget but at other times are hard to ignore. Emotions affect my behavior and my life significantly, even if I do not recognize them. As the debris from emotion builds up in our mind, there is no more space to hide in our own thoughts, and eventually, emotions explode from within. My daily experiences and emotional states are the basis of how my works of art are imagined and constructed. I am motivated to create artwork because I want to release my anxiety and desire to connect with my audience.

As an artist, I want to express my anxious state of mind. I focus on myself, explore my feelings, and record the results as I create my work. I hope my viewers feel renewed in the same way that I do when viewing the end artworks. I grew up frequently practicing how to understand and care for other people's feelings in my life. Both school and society have taught me how to understand others and be courteous. Caring for others' emotions and experiences is a means of

building relationships between people and belonging to society. Nevertheless, it is difficult for me to understand my own feelings, and my education and experiences did not teach me how to deal with them. I believe many people are similar to me: people who can respond to the emotions experienced by others but struggle to understand their own. In Korea, my birth country, the publishing industry has recently undergone a significant change in book preference; books about personal issues like emotions, empathy, and healing now attract attention.¹ I see a reflection of my own experiences when people work to evolve and understand their feelings rather than ignoring and suppressing their emotions.

I used to think that it was not easy to define what I felt until I brought it into my work. By expressing emotions through the language of art, I want to empathize with the audience, who might, like me, crave self-awareness, and guide them toward self-healing through engagement with my work. I do not wish to convey the message that emotions are the center of our society. Instead, through my artwork, I would like to communicate that negative emotions simply deserve to be considered and not ignored when viewers face various situations. I hope that my audience will spend time engaging with my space of my installations, locating emotions they have long since forgotten about and may presently ignore.

My interest in multisensory experiences led me to question why we mostly rely on our eyes to appreciate artwork, just as so many artists before me have questioned the media we use. Although all humans understand the world around them via their sensory experiences, visual artists have used predominantly visual media. However, there is no reason to avoid using more senses to help the audience feel art. My viewers experience my anxiety as they participate in the artwork, which serves as a point of entry for a link to emotional interaction. Then, my viewers can start to understand what I experienced before making this work. My art installations create

places for viewers to think about emotions which dominate their life. Many people report feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress as the world moves at an increasingly rapid pace and faces unprecedented challenges, yet few take the time to acknowledge and experience these negative thoughts.² By sharing my own experiences in my art, I invite the audience to engage with and experience their negative feelings safely.

Through each chapter in my thesis, I will explain how my art relates to everyday life and emotion. I make art that assigns a narrative to daily objects such as a chair, clock, and soap. Viewers' familiarity with such daily objects makes my art more accessible and I hope it further softens the boundary between art and life. I show how art encourages people to deal with emotions in meaningful ways. I will describe how audience members react and respond to my work differently, revealing their individuality and varied experiences.

1. Daily Life Becoming Works of Art

I bring my personal experience and emotion to my art, regarding my art as a bridge from my present hardships to my ideal state. Because human emotions are abstract and relative, personal experience can serve to communicate emotion with others. Recently, I brought my concern about my future into *To Dream – To Realize* (2021). I show my conflict between my own personal desires and expected social norms, drawing on concerns about the incompatibility of personal timelines and society's timeline through this artwork. In my *Uncomfortable Lullaby Series* (2020), I brought the pressure caused by my insomnia experience into this work. These experiences are a small part of my life, but I made artwork to relate to people who have suffered similar struggles.

I try to put everyday life and art together in my work because I hope for the peace that exists in my art to enter my everyday life. Sigmund Freud said that art is a conventionally accepted reality where symbols and substitutes can evoke real feelings thanks to artistic illusions.³ Therefore, art forms the middle ground between the reality of frustrating hope and the imaginary world that satisfies it.⁴ I visualize my ideal states by processing the reality around me through my art and go beyond negative emotions.

According to art therapist Edith Kramer⁵, artists are people who develop their ability to resolve conflicts between reality and fantasy and between their instincts and the needs of their super-ego through artwork. Through sublimated artwork in cultural and socially productive forms, artists experience their internal realities at several different levels.⁶ I embraced Kramer's contention of the unique ability of the artist to express and sublimate their emotions in the art process. I think the sublimation process in art production offers a chance to release my negative emotions and prevent them from becoming deep mental wounds.

The philosophical thinking that I engage as a context for my art practice has expanded my art by intertwining it with nonverbal psychology. Moreover, I find that the way art allows for the visualization of nonverbal psychology enables it to release my negative emotions. Art is the primary source for my healing because I find philosophical reasons stemming from art to build my life. My art, and the reflections that I experience as I create art, provide me with a purpose, and I can philosophically examine this purpose. Further, I make art for me and, hopefully by extension, for others. Art is, thereafter, the primary source of my healing.

As an artist, I want to share this healing with my society. Through expanding the point of contact between art and human life, I am interested in making daily life for all who interact with my art, somehow better. My work is meant to provide opportunities for a viewer to empathize and feel consolation. I want them to know that others share their daily fight. More broadly, I contend that art is about the artist's experience, creating a space to unite with people who share the same struggle because of art's link to human life. Art has developed across generations, locations, and cultures with human rituals that started with joy, fear, and hope. In fact, art has developed with the history of humankind from significant events like ancestral rites to mundane, momentary happenings like paintings in the Altamira cave.⁷ Consequently, art has reflected the human mental world and daily life. I think that art gives unity, comfort, and pleasure to humanity. Although I start my process of creating work by tapping into the vulnerability in my life, I study how viewers can imagine my experience and engage with my art. Furthermore, by broadening my artistic process to include everyday experiences or thoughts innate to individual life, I try to find how art seeps into human life.

One example of my approach to art followed my grandfather's death. In 2019, my grandfather passed away. It is still hard to recall this memory. Even though he had fought against

a chronic disease for over ten years, and there were many emergencies when we thought he would die soon, his death was still hard to believe and understand. I could not participate in his funeral because I was in the US and being unable to celebrate his life made me feel lethargic, and deep grief settled in me. However, I could not express my feelings to my family and friends, and I tried to hide my unstable feeling as much as possible. I needed to find my emotional outlet. Based on my unexpected and negative experience, I became interested in change and eternity because I could not say I appreciated every unintended change such as death and disappearance.



[Fig.1] Younser(Seri) Lee, *Timeless Pot Series I*, 2019, Ceramic Slip, Soil, Cactus, Water, Canvas. Changeable Installation (Canvas Size: 36x217"), photographed by the artist

Thus, I tried to find positive aspects in the change to release my negative emotions from my grandfather's death. This desire was relieved by making *Timeless Pots Series* (2019). I started this series with *Timeless Pots I* (2019) [Fig.1]. I created this work with unfired clay pots and plants to express sadness and loss about disappearance and change. I was interested in unfired clay because I was feeling pessimistic about eternity. Nothing is permanent, and everything disappears in time. I strongly felt that everything simply pretends to be eternal. The ceramic slip that I used for the pot sculpture is in an unfinished and in-progress state before firing. I did not fire the slip castings after casting the flowerpot shape; I wanted to reveal that objects are weak and finite even though the materials look strong.

In this installation, the unfired clay flowerpots hold dirt and living plants. As the plants are given the required water to allow them to live, the pots begin to disintegrate and threaten the plants' lives as the dirt falls apart and can no longer support the roots of the plants. I feel this process is

similar to our life cycle and the installation, therefore, promotes thinking about the meaning of life and death. This installation started with normal-shaped clay pots lined up on the canvas like dominoes, but the state of the pots changed intentionally and accidentally over time. After disintegration, the trace remained on the canvas.

This installation changed when I poured water into the flowerpot, but it also changed by itself to affect the other clay pots like dominoes. As the water in one flowerpot's water flows out, the water and residue move toward the other pots, disintegrating the other pots on the canvas. Like human life, the flowerpots affect each other both intentional and unintentionally, having a lasting impact. Over the week, this work changed every day. Thus, the work provides a different experience each day. The work appears to be about death, but its constant change gives it a future and potential. Unlike a completed painting where nothing is left to imagine, *Timeless Pot Series 1* is never finished. The potential always exists for it to become something new. I explored uncontrolled change and the meaning of that change through this installation. Here, I address loss through the impermanence of things: ephemeral acts of dissolving clay pots.

After *Timeless Pot 1*(2019), when I cleaned up my installation, I was curious about how much this work could continue to change even though I originally did not plan beyond the first series. I decided to preserve the residues on the canvas after *Timeless Pot Series 1* to study chance in change and made *Timeless Pot 2* (2019) [Fig.2]. The plants, soil residue, and water stains from the pots left a drawing-like trace. The canvas became an index of the past, providing a record of the previous week when I installed the work. My audience and I can see this canvas and imagine what might have happened when I was not in the installation room.



[Fig.2] Younser (Seri) Lee, *Timeless Pot Series 2*, 2019, Residues of Timeless Pot Series 1 on Canvas, 36x217", photographed by the artist

After trying *Timeless Pot 2* (2019), I wanted the work to continue evolving, which led me to experiment with clay. First, I fired the dissolved clay pots that I used in *Timeless Pot 1* to visualize the chance of change and the meaning of death. Before firing, the pots were weak and useless because they were quickly fading away. I did not want to discard them, but I did not know how to keep them. I thought about how I could revive the ruined clay pots, and it reminded me of how

people try to hold on to their memories forever. Thus, I decided to fire them because I wanted them to be mementos, representing my experience and memory. After making *Timeless Pot 3* (2019) [Fig.3], this process made me want to go to the next step because I had challenged the limitation of the unexpected change.



[Fig.3] Younser (Seri) Lee, *Timeless Pot Series 3*, 2019, Fired Ceramics from Timeless Pot Series 1, Changeable Installation, photographed by the artist

I made *Timeless Pot 4* (2019) [Fig.4] by preserving the plant residues from *Timeless Pot Series 1* in a glass jar. This transparent glass jar is used in Korea when people want to make jam or alcohol or to preserve food and fruit for years. In this process, I also wanted to explore the possibility of change and the meaning of death. Even though this was the final step in this series, the remains keep changing continually and makes a new environment.



[Fig.4] Younser(Seri) Lee, *Timeless Pot Series 4*, 2019, Glass Jar, Residues of Timeless Pot Series 1, ø 30 x 40, photographed by the artist

In the glass jar, humidity, molds, and rotten plants compose the new environment, making me feel that this work still lives. [Fig.5] I was excited to see what the next step would be. As I kept developing this series, I realized that I could find new opportunities in the vague and uncomfortable changes. Even if everything runs toward extinction and death, I understand that my mindset defines

a cycle of life and eternity. While I created the *Timeless Pots Series*, I did not expect such spontaneous developments in my work. I usually make a well-thought-out plan of my art-making process, and I dislike unexpected change. Nevertheless, I acknowledged and understood the free flow of change and enjoyed the unforeseen moments through this series work.



[Fig.5] Younser(Seri) Lee, *Timeless Pot Series 4*, 2020, Glass Jar, Residues of Timeless Pot Series 1, ø 30 x 40, photographed by the artist

Felix Gonzalez-Torres' work had a profound impact on me while I was making the *Timeless Pot* series. I am especially interested in Gonzalez-Torres' *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* (1991) [Fig.6] because it foretells the necessity for future alterations.⁸



[Fig.6] Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, 1991, Candies individually wrapped in multicolor cellophane, endless supply, Dimensions vary with installation; ideal weight 175 lbs, Photo: Lise Balsby; Courtesy ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, Denmark. Art: ©Felix Gonzalez-Torres; Courtesy the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

Although I already know everything will disappear with time, his interactive, participatory work made me realize things can perpetually change without stagnation. I think he saw disappearance as a type of evolution for eternality. When I see this work, I feel the disappearance of this art is to continue its existence; these are not frozen and stopped objects but rather function as a continuously evolving new forms. Kaja Silverman writes:

Being is a becoming, and this becoming does not achieve stabilization even with death. Long after a given being has ceased to be physically in the world, it remains

there, mnemonically, 'housed' in all of the psyches that have ever affirmed it. In each of those psyches, it is not a coherent and stable entity, but a constellation of diverse and highly particularized sounds and images, caught up in a ceaseless process of flux and transformation.^{9 10}

I am captivated by Silverman's conceptualization of "becoming," which is a limitless state and stimulates a new understanding of how to face my grandfather's death and how I develop my series. Although I realize that eternity is defined in my own mind, I am sure remembrance and commemoration stymie disappearance. Furthermore, I am interested in Gonzalez-Torres because he also lost a person precious to him and shared his loss through his work. Even though death is inevitable, I feel the artist overcame the fear of death and discovered the stage of possibilities in changes and disappearing by destroying the original form itself.

My fear and anxiety about losing my precious people or valuable things served as the impetus of this series. Through this series and my interest in Gonzalez-Torres, I realized that an unexpected future of numerous changes includes positive possibilities even when changing looks like disappearing. Through my work, I can address and control my fear of death and loss. Finding those possibilities in overcoming disappearance and change helped me release lethargy and deep sorrow about my grandfather's death. Only then was I able to let my grandfather, who was still embedded in my heart, leave little by little.

In another work called *Take Care of Me (2020)* [Fig.7], I focused on the meaning of material because it allowed me to relax, take care of myself, and overcome my longing and loneliness in this harsh situation. Last Spring, everyone was confronted with the unexpected crisis of COVID-19. Like most schools and workplaces, my university closed its doors and began to switch to online formats. I confronted sudden and terrible changes like isolation from friends and family. Many international students went back to their countries for safety.



[Fig.7] Younser (Seri) Lee, *Take Care of Me*, 2020, Soap, 8x4x2", 2020-2021, photographed by the artist

For me, returning to Korea was nearly unimaginable. I did not want to be on a plane with lots of passengers, and booking a flight was nearly impossible as few flights were making the journey. I was anxious and fearful of seeing others or even going outside with the uncertainty of the pandemic. I stayed at home alone for quite a long time, and it was hard to tell when I could return to the comforts of my homeland. My life was like living in prison without the promise of a release date. The longer I was alone, the more depressed I became. The depression turned into an unbearable longing for people because of a lack of support. I especially longed for my parents because I felt uncomfortable relying on friends and classmates who were also struggling. At this time, these painful days influenced my art directly. The more I thought about my mom, who called me daily in a worried state, the more I missed her. My COVID-induced depression led to lethargy and

feeling generally pessimistic. I took up unhealthy eating habits and did not go outside for any fresh air. After so many months of solitude, I was tired of being alone with my hardships. I wanted warm, loving comfort – especially from my mother.

From this emotional place, I began to create in order to heal. The work I created at this time is made of a white organic soap base. Organic white soap serves as a symbol of my childhood and my mother's efforts. When I was a child, I suffered from atopic dermatitis. My mother dedicated herself to treating my sensitive skin from an ailment called atopic dermatitis. She chose my soap very carefully, selecting white organic soap. I used this soap as a basis for my art. Like my old soap, it reminded me of my mother's effort and love.

As you can see in the title of this sculpture, this sculpture is meant to take care of me because I really needed someone's care in that moment. "Take Care of Me" is a sincere and genuine sentiment for me, like a signal for rescue. Yet, it is unusual for adults to ask their elderly parents to take care of them. These were strange and challenging times. In addition, *Take Care of Me* offers a gesture that seems to be for touching and connecting. The shape looks like a comforting hand, and this form symbolizes love because people can reach out with affection. Thus, I can feel and share their love and warmth by laying a comforting hand. I can pat myself with this hand-shaped soap which represents my mother's hand. Also, I can take care of myself by washing my face with this sculpture, making me feel fresh and clean.

Janine Antoni's performance in *Lick and Lather* (1993-1994) [Fig.8] inspired my tribute to my mother's touch.¹¹ Antoni created her works from everyday activities. In this case, those activities were licking and bathing. She uses these activities that most people do daily as both the art and the method through which the art is created. In this way, day-to-day activities became moments of awe because the results of these activities are more noticeable as art.¹² Through

viewing her daily activities in her works, I am intrigued about the purpose and outcomes of everyday, mundane activities and shifting viewpoints.



[Fig.8] Janine Antoni, *Lick and Lather*, 1993, Bust: 24 x 16 x 13", Pedestal: 45 7/8 x 16", Installation dimensions: variable, photographed by Lee Stalsworth at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., 1999.

Viewers can only see photo documentations of the changing soap sculpture and clues for how it was used. [Fig.9] When I made this sculpture, I especially missed my mother, and I hoped this sculpture would include my mother's warm and loving touch. This sculpture has a role of reminiscence for my childhood memory. I remember my childhood meetings with nostalgia

because these feelings protect me from the pain of longing and the sadness of loneliness. Much like other daily objects, the interactive sculpture I created is subject to changes due to external or internal factors, causing these objects to contain temporal narratives and additional meanings.



[Fig.9] Younser (Seri) Lee, *Take Care of Me*, 2020, Soap, 8x4x2", 2020-2021, photographed by the artist.

My childhood memory holds value for this work because it connects my emotions and goes beyond the conventional sense of time. The passage of time is often memorialized through specific objects from our daily lives related to specific events. In this work, the representation of my mother's hand also has a role as a "mnemonic souvenir."¹³ This hand can be used as a metaphor related to the circumstances, actions, and feelings of the moment based on daily life. In a similar vein, Antoni said, "For me, creativity is about unlocking memories within the body. It is also about thinking with the body."¹⁴ Her statement helped to unlock my childhood memories, feeling the power of these memories. In *Take Care of Me*, the soap and the shape of my mother's hand reminded me of when my mother washed me and took care of me as a child. As a result, this hand

sculpture makes me realize my childhood memory with my mother that has been forgotten, and this sculpture has the power to heal my emotional exhaustion due to the pandemic.



[Fig.10] Younser (Seri) Lee, *Take Care of Me*, 2021, Soap, 8x4x2", 2020-2021, photographed by the artist.

Although this hand sculpture is perishing through its generosity, like the tree in *The Giving Tree*¹⁵ by Shel Silverstein, the soap sculpture gives affection and care to me. Its disappearance does not make me sad because it offers the possibility of helping my heart heal. [Fig. 10] The changes in the sculpture are set up to form an internal timeline in work, and the process of change becomes evidence of my emotional healing. Although the more I use this sculpture, the more it disappears, the ephemeral act and the change in this work are used as a therapeutic way for me and for viewers who need to take care of their emotions by experiencing this care with me. I expect

this work could be a consolation to people who need affection and connection, especially in these isolated times.

2. Personal Narrative in Daily Objects

Because of my interest in connecting my ordinary life and art, I use everyday objects as art materials for my work. As daily objects exist in human life and interact with people directly, they suggest many meanings. Beyond each viewer's own experience with the object, my found objects are a lens through which viewers see a self-portrait of an artist. Therefore, selecting specific found objects is the most exciting aspect of my art-making process.



[Fig.11] Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, 1991, Wall clocks and paint on wall
Overall dimensions vary with installation, Original clock size: 14 inches diameter each,
Image courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres uses daily objects in his practice. His choice of objects suggests poetic and metaphorical ambiguity beyond their intended purpose. Gonzalez-Torres often used multiple examples of objects together to express his desired statement, which can be observed in his work *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)* [Fig.11].¹⁶ In *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, the artist initially set to the same time for those two clocks. These are battery-operated clocks and will eventually fall out of sync and stop. Gonzalez-Torres's romantic partner was diagnosed with AIDS and eventually succumbed to the illness. In his work, the partner's illness inspired him to use ordinary objects to track and measure the inevitable flow of time, when one of the clocks stops or breaks, they can both be reset to pursue perfect synchrony.¹⁷ Through this work, I understand his sorrow which inspired the work. He used those time measuring objects as his language to cherish his memory about his partner. Perhaps the intention was to overcome a fear of time and its passage by facing that which scares him: the clock.

In an interview for the magazine *Bomb* (1995), Ross Bleckner and Gonzalez-Torres conversed as artists:

RB Do you think your work is sentimental?

FGT It is sentimental, but it's also about infiltration. It's beautiful; people get into it. But then, the title or something, if you look really closely at the work, gives out that it's something else.

RB Oddly enough, I think that my work does have a certain sentiment to it, but I am not sentimental at all.

FGT All great art has sentiment.¹⁸

Through this interview, we can see that Gonzalez-Torres wants to convey not the pure function of an object but the specific feeling to which he wants to guide his viewers. His choice of objects forms an expressive language that reveals a concept. The artist's interpretation of love, based on his experience, leads to a work of art that contains elements that people can sympathize with, namely, daily objects. In Gonzalez-Torres' works, the objects selected by the artist are the evidence of the artist's sensibility, and their inner nature depicts the artist's mind and life, and by extension, that of the audience who sees their own life through the object chosen by the artist. Found objects are a mirror that reflects the sentiments of both the artist and the artist's audience.

People use, own, and share space with objects, which function beyond their practical use in various forms. In his book, *The System of Objects*, Jean Baudrillard explains:¹⁹

Every object thus has two functions – to be put to use and to be possessed. The first involves the field of the world's practical totalization by the subject, the second an abstract totalization of the subject undertaken by the subject himself outside the world.²⁰

His definition of an object's multiple functions inspires me. Like everyone, I use objects every day, and my life consists of various objects. However, daily objects can also operate as symbols with multiple interpretations beyond their universal use, due to memory and experience. Objects work as reminders of specific moments in life like soap in *Take Care of Me*.

Based on Baudrillard's perspective about objects, the subject defines an object when its own functions no longer define it. In this case, all objects serve as abstractions serving as the vehicle containing sentiments, memories, and personal connections.²¹ Thus, I believe the metaphor develops as language, projecting the artist's observation and inner intentions into the object. In my art, collecting objects can be understood as making a subjective language, considering symbolic and metaphorical meanings other than their original functions.

Roger Bordier wrote about the present state of realistic objects as “allowing us to imagine the basis of our inner mind, certain psychological phenomena, and instincts.”²² I am intrigued by his definition because I believe daily objects become a universal language to everyone. Of course, people have different thoughts and impressions about one object. For example, in the use of the clock, Gonzalez-Torres symbolically demonstrates that nothing will endure forever in his work, *Untitled (perfect lovers)*, while I see the clock as a symbol of pressure that causes anxiety and stress. However, people can think of standard shapes and functions of objects. If someone does not follow common usage of the object or is critical of such universality, the person might become separated from the larger society. Therefore, daily objects as art are the most effective method to reveal my life and manifest my ideas to viewers.

The object as the artwork has meaning beyond the original function because it exemplifies the artist’s intention to express meaning. When Marcel Duchamp introduced the meaning of ready-made, he said that ready-made art does not exist because choosing an object is an artistic choice, even when using an already completely made object.²³ According to Duchamp, we hold the possibility of expanding the use of daily objects to represent a deeper meaning. Likewise, to choose is meaningful in itself because the artist gives the object authority to stimulate our imagination. A chosen object is qualified as an expressive tool of the artist and has its value in a metaphorical language that implies a new meaning. The object serves as a symbolic language for the artist’s expression.

The chosen objects by artists are autonomous symbols, not of apparent singular reality, but subject to the entire context of social phenomena. All artwork elements have their own communication functions or values, apart from the subject matter of the work of art. Interpretation of art does not mean that the artist creates a code or symbol in his or her work that only he or she

can know and lets the viewer interpret the secret by himself or herself. Therefore, reading each artwork is to rely on what is shown and to seek interpretations of other meanings beyond the visual reality. The interpretation results from the complex interaction of a range of factors such as the social, cultural environment surrounding both the artist and the viewer and their intellectual and psychological situation. In this regard, the audience's responsibility is broadened and has been expanded to be equal or greater than the artist's role in conceptual art. In my art, I use the object itself as a metaphorical tool to stimulate a viewer's imagination beyond the object's original function, connecting the audience to my imagination. To interpret the symbols represented by daily objects in my artwork, viewers should also approach the meaning of objects beyond their universal usages.

In my art practice, I incorporate clocks. Clocks and time make up a large part of my life because considering the passing of time contributes to my anxiety. Time is a universally experienced phenomenon, but how society considers time depends on its historical experience and cultural context. Time is also a clue to understanding human society because society is a cultural community that operates thanks to time and space coordination.²⁴ I believe time is a basis for society to function, but it is also relative to each individual. For example, human society functions on a shared understanding time, where generally people sleep at night and conduct business during the day. However, individuals' experience time differently depending on whether they are bored or excited, or on a roller coaster or sitting on a bench, even though the same measured amount of time is occurring for everyone. Although there is no ideal way of using time, I feel the concept of socially constructed time, such as 9-5 work hours, forces individuals to abide by this socially constructed timetable, which may cause people to sacrifice their desires and their own timelines.

Before the mid-Eighteenth Century, at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, time had not yet become strictly defined, and measuring it was not yet a priority for society.²⁵ People measured time by observing the way that shadows changed throughout the day on local landmarks. In Korea, my ancestors used sundials, called Angbu-ilgu, and measured time more precisely by observing how the shadows would change.²⁶ As we approached the late Seventeenth Century, the accuracy of the mechanisms used to measure time gradually improved thanks to scientific efforts. However, nature's natural rhythm and processes were enough for most people who worked in agriculture to ascertain the changing time.²⁷ I guess the desires to measure time emerged from organizing travel and coordinating movement across larger spaces in shorted time-periods. Business interests drove the need for standardized time, yet it has had enduring effects on how we measure our own progress. Thus, I have struggled with my desire to use time differently than how it is universally used by society.

I deal with this conflict between using my own time and aligning my pursuits with society's clock in my art. Viewers connect with the idea of time as well. We all experience time, making it standard for all, and it is an essential element of human life. However, sometimes I feel that time is used as a means for evaluating when one fulfills specific expectations in the society that we belong to now. From the moment people enter society, they live according to the social schedule dictated by law or tacitly implied. It is hard to ignore what society prescribes as the ideal way of using time in our lives. Personally, I derive happiness and stability when I live my life without taking into consideration the various benchmarks society has set for my life depending on my age or the time of day; however, sometimes, I feel anxious and defeated when I realize that I am lagging behind the achievements that others have made on the timeline society has formed. As a member of society, I think that I do better when I hit the set targets for me on society's timeline. I often

become frustrated when I compare my ideals with my reality. I ask myself ‘must I live like this?’ because I am tired of investing my energy into society’s timeline.

Nevertheless, I feel uneasy when I see that others live quiet existences around me dictated by society’s timeline. I am afraid that I will be left alone as society moves forward without me. I feel our lives are an endless string of trouble between our desire for our preferred progress and society’s timeline. I have heard and seen many stories of people who regret how they have used their time and who decided to chase society’s goals rather than figure out what they wanted to do with their time. Here, we may witness the tension between individual lives and the timeline society has ascribed to our existence. I wish to break free from the anxiety and pressure that society has placed upon us and use my time to understand who I am and what I want to do. Therefore, I believe that the clock is the best object that symbolizes my desire and my anxiety stemming from society’s way of dictating our lives.

In *Uncomfortable Lullaby 2: Burdensome Clock* (2020) [Fig.12], I created a sculpture with an alarm clock and a weighing scale face. This work does not function as a clock or a scale. A clock is a ready-made, mundane, and fragile object which runs with a small battery. However, I find that I cannot resist the continual ticking forward of the clock's hands in my life. This situation gives rise to pressure in my thoughts. When I planned for this work, I experienced insomnia because I felt the time was engulfing me, and that caused me to feel stress. In the situation, although I had planned early in the morning, I could not fall asleep because of so much anxiety and thought. When I tried to sleep, my thoughts and concerns bothered my sleep. While I laid on the bed lethargic, I felt that the passing of time was both meaningless and intensely stressful and repressive. Thus, I manipulated the alarm clock face to a scale face instead of the clock’s typical dials, reflecting my experience of increasing weight on my shoulders as hours passed. In this sculpture,

the scale repeats the process of increasing. Even turning a complete cycle, nothing gets better, but it starts increasing the weight again. I try to express the endless oppression through this repeating process.



[Fig.12] Younser (Seri) Lee, *Uncomfortable Lullaby 2 (Burdensome Clock)*, 2020, 4.6x6.5x2.2", Alarm Clock, Scale, photographed by the artist

My interest in the meaning of clocks led to my most recent work, *To Dream – To Realize* (2021). [Fig.13] I use clocks as inspired by Gonzalez-Torres' *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, which I previously mentioned, in the form of an homage. In this installation piece, I use ten manipulated clocks. Looking at social life from a broader perspective, I started this work with questions about and resistance to how conventional social norms in spending and managing time limits the diversity of individuals' lives. How fantastic would it be if I could manage my time solely thinking about my own intentions? During my life span, I have often been confronted with meaningful

choices for my future. Whenever I make these choices, there is a conflict between using my time in a socially competent way and using my time as I wish. Consequently, I feel that society imposes its expectations on how individuals can use and manage their time.



[Fig.13] Younser (Seri) Lee, *To Dream – To Realize*, 2021, Changeable Installation (Clock size: 12x12x2.1 inch, Box size: 42x24x7.5 inch), Alarm Clocks, Arduino, Pressure Sensor, Wood box, Electric Cords, Speaker, Mp3 Player, photographed by Richard Sprengeler

In the installation, asking, “What time is it?” is meaningless because the clocks point to a random time. All ten clocks start with their arrows at the same location. However, the clocks diverge gradually over time and fall out of sync because the timing of when I insert the batteries and the batteries’ charges are different. I hope the differences in these clocks can convey to viewers the meaning of different individuals in society. Based on the history of time, I agree that the notion of time supports human life. Yet, I doubt why time dominates my life and what absolute time is

because I think time is local and relative. I believe that there is no absolute way for individuals to dictate the use of their own time. Therefore, through this installation, I hope the audience will be able to take their time on the provided platform to think about how they are spending their own time.

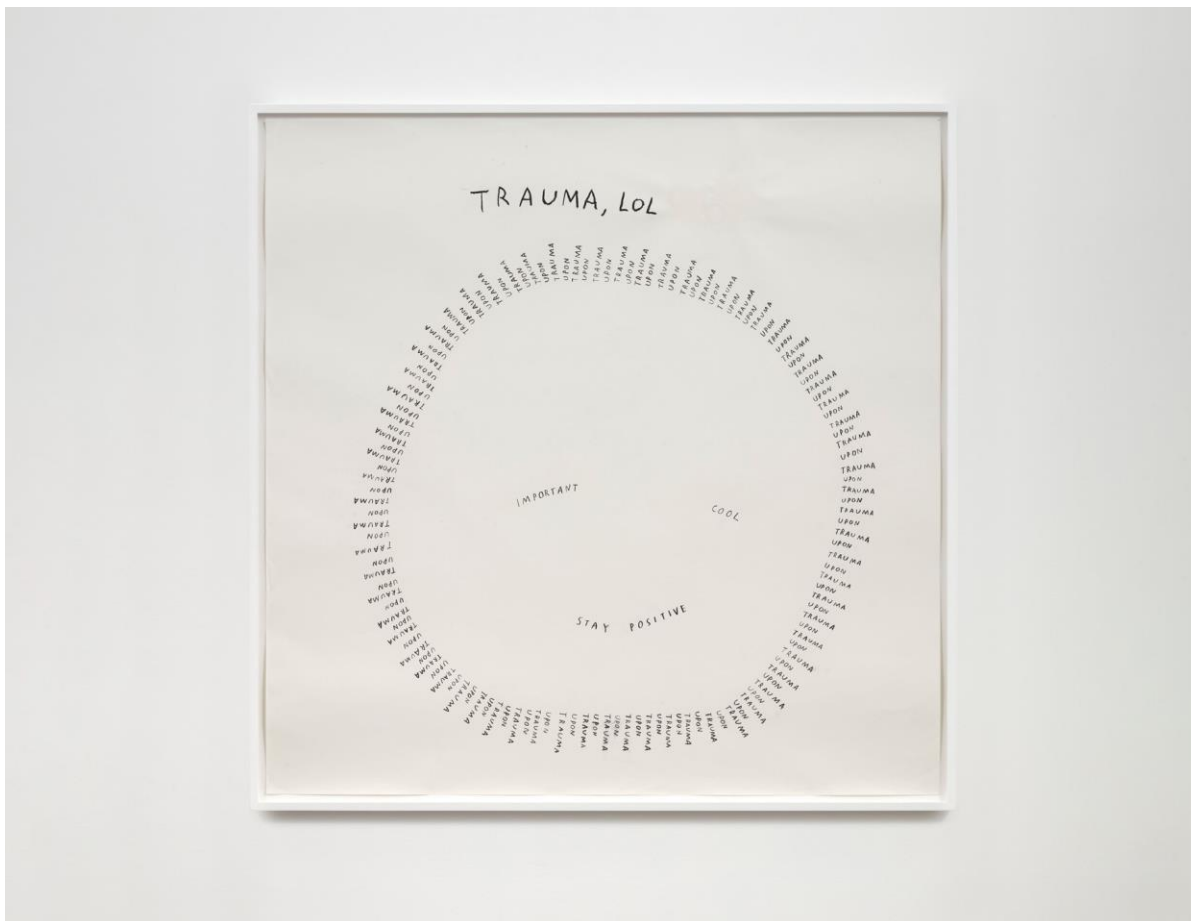
In my artwork, daily objects are one of the noticeable tools to pursue poetic and emotional expression, including my narrative, which reflects my present situation. I believe the daily objects in my art function as a bridge to connect my philosophy and the viewers' philosophy by prompting us to ask questions about these objects can be assigned meaning. I try to develop my material language by choosing the average objects that are a part of my life. I want to contribute to harmonizing art and human life.

3. Naming the object with text

I believe text is a familiar and poetic means to convey my concept to my viewers and help people broaden their ability to understand my intention. I think using text as art blurs the line between human life and art. Although using text in art has not been prevalent in Western painting traditions since the Renaissance, it has been actively accepted by avant-garde art since the 20th Century. In art, text has served as a tool for expression beyond simple text from ancient times to modern times in various media and other expressions. In conceptual art, which was born as an echo of the artistic epistemology of modernism, text is validated as a tool of artists' expressions.²⁸ The use of text as a form of art includes the original function of the text while simultaneously developing it into a system of formative communication. Text catches viewers' eyes quickly because it is clear both visually and metaphorically. Therefore, I use text in my art to help viewers approach my metaphors beyond the more common function of text as pure communication.

Historically, images and texts have competed with each other to reproduce reality and express human emotions. The usage of text in modern art became prevalent not only for the conceptual artists but also for Dadaists. In addition, the role of text in conceptual art contributed to the expansion of artistic media in which diversity of interpretation was prioritized along with viewers' participation. With the advent of conceptual art, new ways of using text emerged: using text as an alternative means of art, using text to provide information by combining it with photographs, or using the text itself as a sculpture. In particular, there has been a significant increase in number of artists using only text as artwork.

I am intrigued by Christine Sun Kim's drawings, feeling the texts in her drawings work as her voice. These works use narrative components to express authenticity from her mind. I love her language and wordplay in her drawing.



[Fig.14] Christine Sun Kim, *Trauma, LOL*, 2020, Charcoal on paper, 58.25 x 58.25 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles. photographed by Paul Salveson

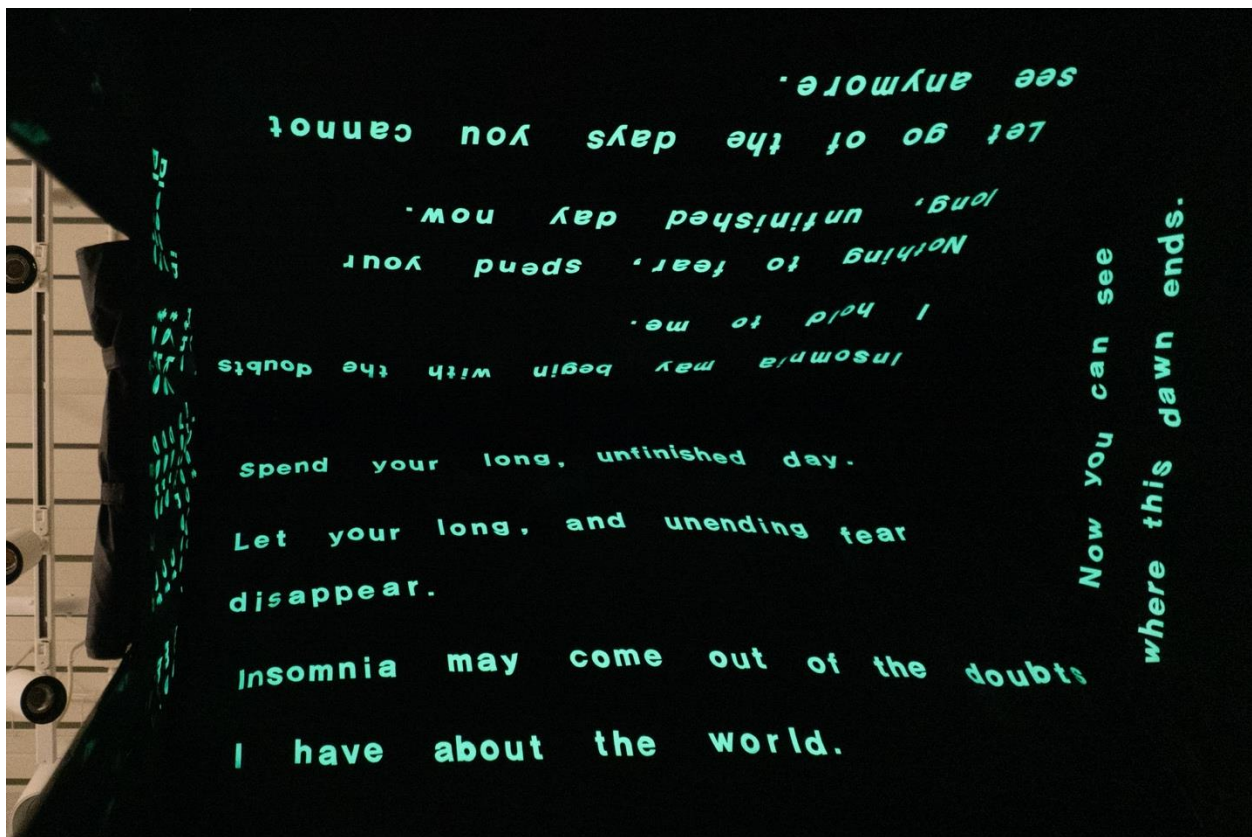
Kim's background of using text is different from mine because it explores the linguistic structure of ASL and uses it as an element to expose traumatic experiences in a hearing-dominant social environment and criticize society.²⁹ She reflected,

Humor puts people at ease, so I wasn't so serious. People feel much more comfortable when there's a little humor involved...My work tends to be a little heavy. I don't want to alienate people looking at my work...I can layer the heaviness with humor for audiences

to connect with as a point of entry. Then they can start to really understand where I am coming from.³⁰

According to the interview, the artist uses humorous text like the word “lol” in her work *Trauma, LOL* (2020) [Fig.14], as an element that evokes a connection with the audience through her texts, arguing that connection could allow the audience to “really” begin to understand the artist's situation, which is consistent with my purpose of using the text as showing my authenticity.³¹

After feeling inspired about the role of text in art, I created my installation, *Uncomfortable Lullaby 1 (Silent playhouse)*, using a play tent and a stool. Inside the black house-shaped tent, glow-in-the-dark phrases appear on the ceiling. [Fig.15]

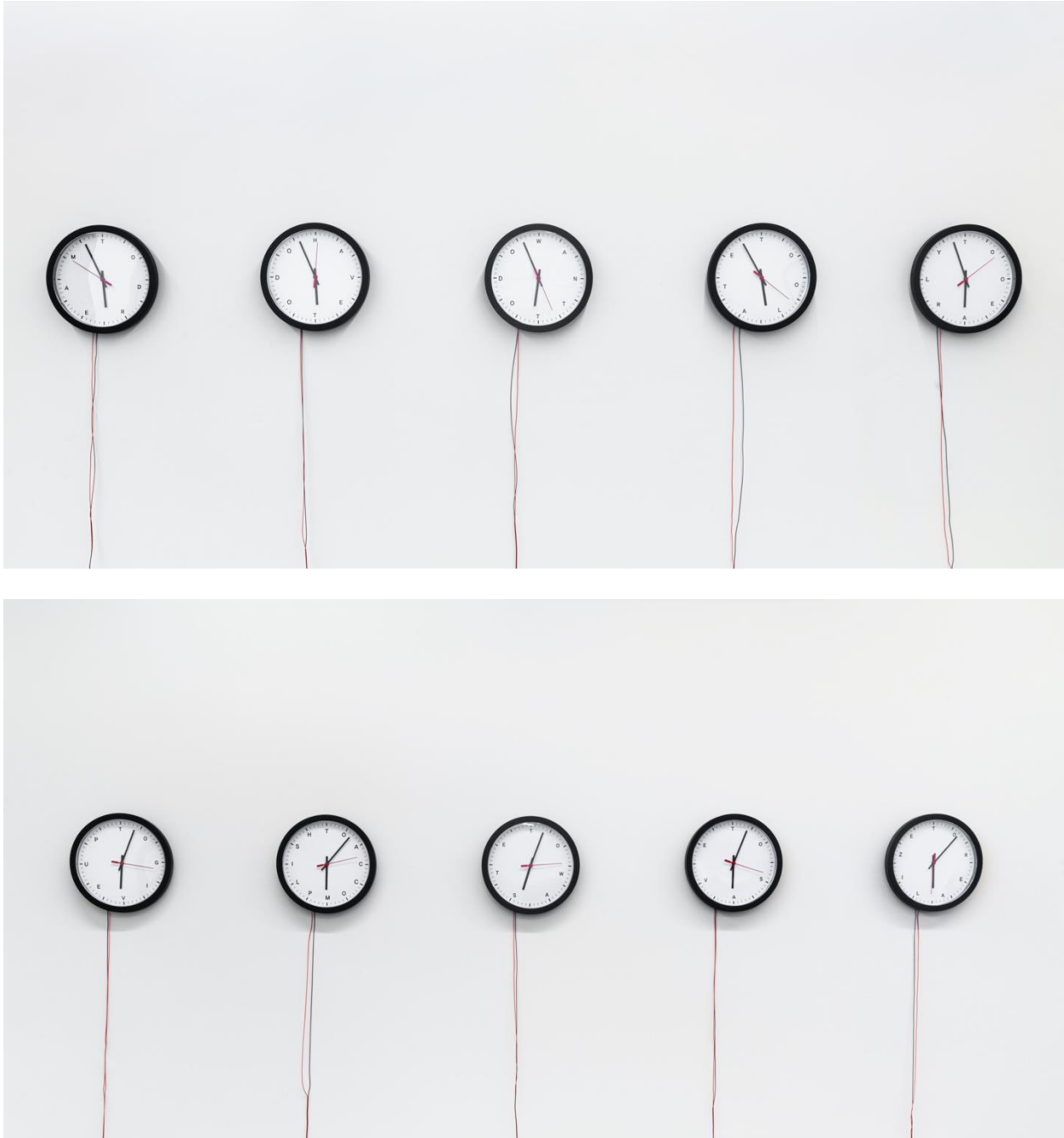


Younser(Seri) Lee, *Uncomfortable Lullaby 1 (Silent Playhouse)*, 2020



[Fig.15] Younser(Seri) Lee, *Uncomfortable Lullaby 1 (Silent Playhouse)*, 2020, Waterproof Fabric, Stool, Glow-in-dark Sticker, Speaker, Pressure Sensor with Arduino, Mp3 Player, Changeable Installation (The House size: 50 x40 x 50 inch), photographed by the artist

The text is glowing in the house because I cut the glow-in-the-dark paper for the words, which cooperate with the black play-tent. The black tent is a symbol of both my protection and fear. I cannot sleep in an entirely dark space, and when I was young, I hid in my tiny tent whenever I was scared. My trouble sleeping then was slightly different from my current insomnia because, at that time, I was kept awake because I was afraid of the dark. The darkness I encountered while lying down in bed also forced me to remain awake. After all, darkness blocked my eyesight and caused a lot of negative thoughts. My parents put up a glow-in-the-dark sticker to solve my sleep problem since I hate to stay in the dark. Therefore, these glow-in-the-dark texts are a symbol of protection.



[Fig. 16] Yoonser(Seri) Lee, *To Dream-To Realize*, 2021, Changeable Installation (Clock size: 12x12x2.1 inch , Box size: 42x24x7.5 inch), Clocks, Arduino, Pressure Sensor, Wood box, Electric Cords, Speaker, Mp3 Player. photographed by Gaoyuan Pan

With similar inspiration, the clocks in *To Dream-To Realize* (2021) are set up so that the texts are paired each to express repeated conflicts. “TO DREAM” partners with “TO REALIZE.” They are located at the beginning and end in this installation and are this work’s title. “HAVE TO DO”

matches “WANT TO DO.” They show my internal conflict directly. “TOO LATE” pairs up with “TOO EARLY.” This pair represents conflict about “timing” in human life. “TO GIVE UP” forms a pair with “TO ACCOMPLISH.” These phrases, likewise, show my desire and conflict. “TO WASTE” is connected to “TO SAVE.” They mean a situation in which my efforts seem like a waste of time to other people's eyes.

The use of text in this work is similar in the layout of traditional clocks, with only the part of the clock's original dial replaced by the text. Therefore, it is difficult for the audience to read and understand the text easily at once. Through this, I hope people will spend more time with my work and think about the metaphorical meaning of the work.

In this installation, I use Gothic font style to pursue simplicity because it increases visibility and visualizes strong tones. Beyond the themes and meanings shown in the work, hidden metaphors exist within the formal and formative elements of the work, identifying the semiotic nature of the text to create more possibilities for interpretation. Text functions as an element of empathy wherein everyone can easily interpret its meaning. Then, for me, the purpose of using text is to help me interpret various symbols of everyday materials that I choose as art materials.

4. Importance of a Multisensory Experience

My research into multisensory art stemmed from observing works by artists in the movement of Fluxus.³² Fluxus required a multisensory approach that incorporates the other senses beyond vision like hearing, touch, taste, and smell. In utilizing these sensory elements in combination with each other, artists can create a multi-layered experience. In addition, expanding farther than traditional visual modes led to the active involvement of the audience and an expansion beyond the artist's perspective alone.³³



[Fig. 17] Joseph Beuys, 1982, 7000 Eichen (7000 Oaks), Collaborative Performance, Dimension Variable.

Fluxus works such as Joseph Beuys' *7000 Oaks* (1982) [Fig. 17], which are completed by audience intervention and interpretation of the presented work, resist the existing stereotype that the artist

is an independent producer, and the viewer is a passive consumer.³⁴ Predominantly, I like *7000 Oaks* because Beuys said, "I not only want to stimulate people, I want to provoke them."³⁵ Inspired by Beuys' thought and the Fluxus movement, I aim to focus on the process of experience as an open structure that combines coincidence, situation, and change which is open to the audience to engage with the artwork.

My artworks are about the direct experience that addresses all the senses. I believe that these direct, hands-on experiences can create a long-term memory.³⁶ For instance, when I learned English, my teacher not only made me memorize English words using my eyes but also made sure to help me apply them in speaking and writing. Then, I was able to use the words whenever I needed them to express my thoughts. Based on these benefits of exploration and application, multisensory experiences create long-term memories in our brains, and this idea significantly affects the type of art I make.³⁷ Thus, multisensory links through art can affect the audience's cognition as they register these staged moments as their own experience, and these are stored as long-term memories.

When I think of the need for personal experience, I am reminded of my childhood experiences. No matter how much my mom gives me advice in my daily life, I did not know if her words were well founded or would have a negative impact unless I had experienced the situation myself. This concept is meaningful for me, knowing the importance of "experiencing it in person" for myself. Therefore, As the artist, I rely on visible elements and incorporate sound or touch, offering viewers a way to connect with daily experience more deeply than using their eyes alone. Here, they can have the "hands-on" multisensory experience. Although my personal experience and emotion inspire my work, I believe that if I offer multisensory experiences to my viewers, they can accept my art as an experience of their own, not just another person's viewpoint.

I wonder if audiences experience art through multiple senses, could we induce active appreciation that evokes empathy? The origin of the English word empathy is based on the German word, *Einfühlung*, which literally means “feeling into” and refers to an act of projecting oneself into another body or environment. I understand this as meaning when I engage with another person's situation and try to feel and perceive what they are thinking at that moment, I am seeking to be empathetic. This attempt to understand others, the concept of empathy, requires interpretation. Roman Krznaric, said that empathy is the process of appreciating others’ situations, understanding their emotions and perspectives, and using their understanding to guide our behavior.³⁸ Through this definition, I find that empathy is about sharing other people's feelings and acting with awareness of interpretations of other people's situations and perspectives.³⁹

I think that the ability to empathize is not innate to humans because I cannot feel the exact physical pain or feelings of happiness and sadness experienced by others. I assume them, relying on my interpretations, and I cannot replicate their feelings and experience. I often wonder if I try to approximate the feelings of others based on my own database of feelings – is this my way of empathizing? Each person is developing their own means for empathy. We cannot ideally experience each other's feelings. Nevertheless, I think the multisensory approach in the art can be a means to encourage empathetic experiences. I cannot fully and perfectly experience another’s feelings. However, I think the multisensory elements that encourage empathy in my work can be clues or guidelines to reach closer experiences. Specifically, if my viewers can empathize with my own experience, which inspired my art, I imagine the viewers may build an emotional bond with my artwork.

One of my strategies to evoke empathy is to offer a link to getting close to my experience through participation. How people perceive, interact with, and interpret the object, depends on the

situation. In my art, I create installations, considering the relationship between my work and the space. The interaction between a viewer, artwork, and space causes numerous possibilities of experience and interpretation. My goal is to narrow the gap between artwork and viewer to draw empathy from the audience as they engage with daily objects. Pursuing interaction through audience participation is to enable a new thought process by artistic experience. This experience centers on forming a relationship between the viewer and the artwork, which serves as a communication channel. Nowadays, audiences have been given the role of intervening, editing, and reconstructing artworks through various attempts on the artist's behalf to strike a communication channel with the viewer like Olafur Eliasson's *The Weather Project* and Yayoi Kusama's *Longing For Eternity*. The creation of new channels is an indication of active participation. As a result, the study of the relationship between art and audience is meaningful in finding the ways that art and human life intersect and in viewing our lives through the various methods of communication that we see in art.

5. Participation for Personal Empathic Exchange

Vision alone is not the absolute standard to distinguish what is considered a work of art. I bring daily objects and life into my work, pursuing an ideal where art and everyday life live in harmony. Consequently, I create a space with my chosen and manipulated objects and generate multisensory experiences beyond vision to help my viewers understand my intention. I welcome the audience into my space by encouraging their active participation with a multisensory experience such as an installation that is reliant on audio and visual inputs.

In this section, I compare my recent works to artists who work in a similar vein of participation-based multisensory installations and clarify my unique contributions to the art world as well as my departures from this tradition. Through this process, I demonstrate that while other artists have created work meant to be experienced by groups, political movements, or purely formal experiences, my work focuses on the individual and creates a multisensory experience that encourages self-care, meditation, relaxation, and empathy.

One way to relate directly to an artwork is to participate in the artwork. For example, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* (1990) by Felix Gonzalez-Torres consists of a big pile of candies on the exhibition hall floor. The weight of the candy pile is equal to the weight of the artist's lover. Visitors can observe it from many angles as they wander around it, in the same way one observes sculptures. The audience is encouraged to take candy, store it, eat it, or give it to another person. Through the act of taking candy from this work, he projected the experience of his lover, who lost weight because of his battle with HIV/AIDS. Through this installation, Gonzalez-Torres also expresses love for his lost partner and his overarching pessimism regarding the inevitability of death. This work is ongoing. As it changes, the participation of the audience is a key factor. Such

an interactive experience is meaningful as it illuminates the artist's intentions effectively. I expect that those who observe and participate have more intense memories and grasp his meaning more readily.

Regarding another aspect of participation, Nicolas Bourriaud defined relational art in his book *Relational Aesthetics* as an art that takes human relationships and their entire social context as their theoretical and practical starting point.^{40 41} He likewise defined relational aesthetics as an art theory constructed to evaluate works of art in inter-human relationships that reproduce, produce, and promote.⁴² He argues that relational art plays a social-opportunistic role and that relational art fosters relationships among humans. The mutual human relationships created by relational art have an amorphous nature and generate coincidence and contingency. Based on these experiences, he argues that a utopia of reality is a small, instantaneous, and temporary moment of political liberation. This moment goes beyond the purposeful historical view that sustained modernity and, by extension, the utopianism of avant-garde.⁴³ Thus, the basis of the upheaval Bourriaud captures is the end of the Cold War and the transition of systems around the world to neoliberal globalization.

Bourriaud's argument is consistent with the intentions of artists who created participation art in the 1990s. For instance, Rirkrit Tiravanija constructed a kitchen within the gallery which served curry dishes to gallery patrons for free.^{44 45} Through this process, he invites the visitors to an experience that welcomes their participation. [Fig.18]⁴⁶ He also sometimes combines his art creation with the ethics of social participation, inviting viewers to reside and work in his art.⁴⁷ In this regard, Tiravanija's art can be understood as trying to raise awareness for the importance of exploring social roles as artists.

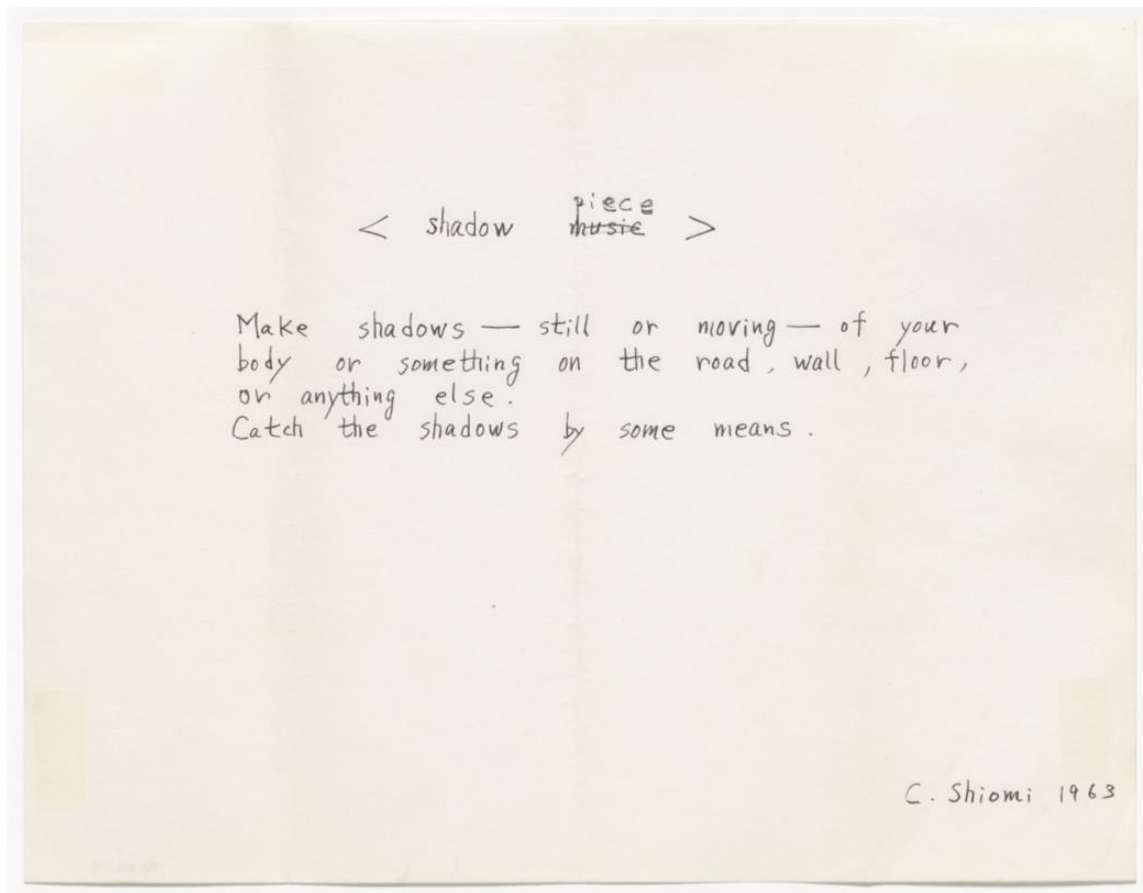


[Fig. 18] Rirkrit Tiravanija. *Untitled*, 1992. Refrigerator, table, chairs, wood, drywall, food and other materials, Dimension variable. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eli Wallach (by exchange).

Unlike Tiravanija, I create participation in my art for personal and individual experience rather than as a social or community-driven commentary. I use participation as an element to provide opportunities for my viewers to focus on themselves as individuals. I hope that the process of participation in my art will serve as a way for my viewers to engage in a private thought processes.

Body movements for participation in my work are based on basic daily activities such as stepping or sitting. My choice was inspired by work like Mieko Shiomi's *Shadow Piece* (1963) [Fig.19].^{48 49} This work is a thought-based and daily task-oriented interaction incorporating the viewers' own bodies with recognizable actions. Compared to Tiravanija, Shiomi's work focuses more on individual action rather than on collective action. In *Untitled* (1992), Tiravanija collapses the distance between artist and audiences, inviting audiences to interact more socially with

contemporary art. Tiravanija has said that his visitors are not looking at a work of art; they are part of it.



[Fig.19] Mieko Shiomi, *Shadow Piece*, 1963, 6 7/8 x 9" (17.5 x 22.8 cm), Ink on Paper

Likewise, visitors are actually eating curry and talking to their friends or new people at the exhibit.⁵⁰ This work led me to interpret his intention to participate in more socially cohesive system, since he tried to create a community with subjectivity, highlighting togetherness.

By contrast, Shiomi's participation does not gather people by making social relationships in front of her artwork, not creating community. Further, when I read her piece, the phrase, "your body," makes me experience this artwork naturally through my gestures. This process requires no involvement from anyone else or relationship. I try to give personal meaning by the last sentence of her work, "Catch the shadows by some means." I think the relationship between myself and the

artwork is significant in appreciating this work. Similarly, my meaning and actions made from her directions are the most valuable.

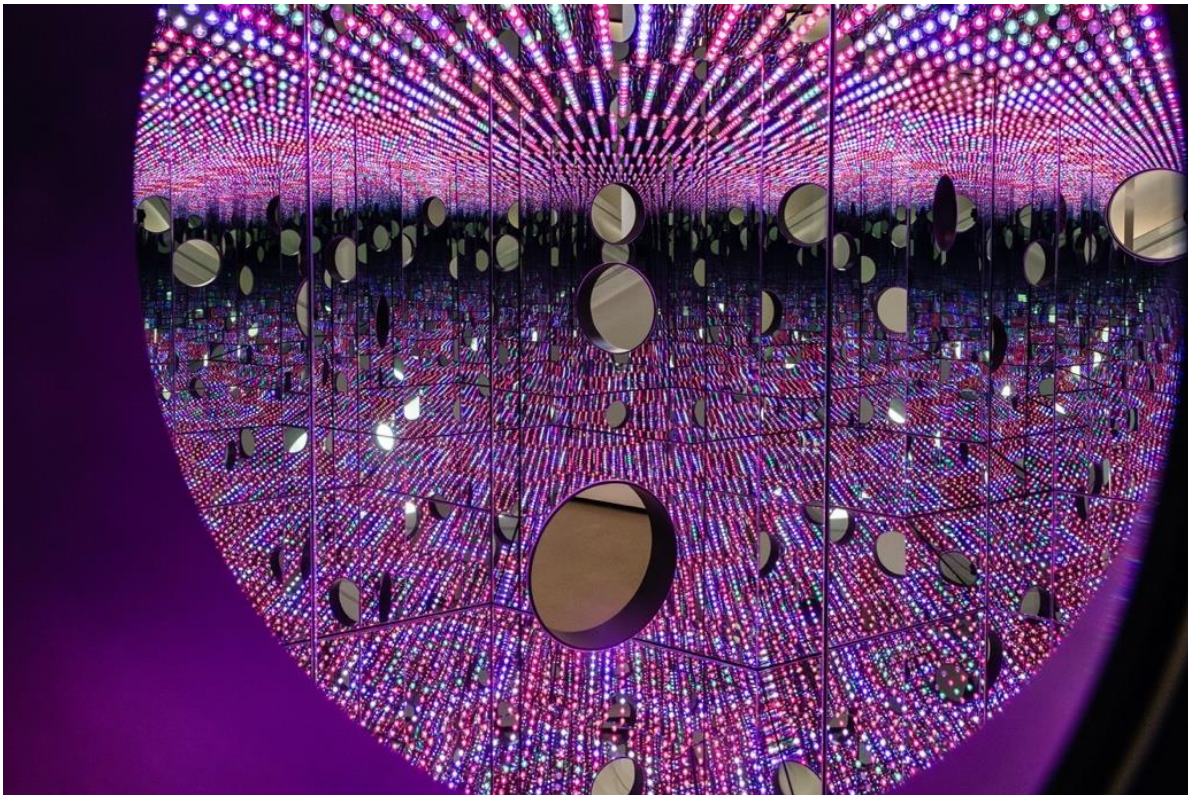


[Fig.20] Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, 2003, Monofrequency lights, projection foil, haze machines, mirror foil, aluminium, and scaffolding, 26.7 m x 22.3 m x 155.4 m, photographed by Tate photographer (Andrew Dunkley & Marcus Leith).

Another artist that blurs the line between art and the audience's daily life is Olafur Eliasson.⁵¹ In his work, *The Weather Project* (2003) [Fig.20], the environment in the gallery is made to appear as though viewers are facing the sun when they enter the space.⁵² In addition, he

carefully adjusted the atmosphere of the space so that he could impact their experience with adjusted lighting and temperature so that the installation could naturally induce the audience's reactions. As a result, people spent time with this unique experience as individuals, taking their time to engage in activities such as sunbathing or yoga in the gallery space. Through these seemingly "unnatural" tasks in a gallery space, the audience experienced art rather than viewing it.

Unlike Eliasson, I strive to create participatory experiences for individuals to have private moments rather than groups to experience as a collective. Multiple people cannot share my work at the same time.



[Fig.21] Yayoi Kusama, *Longing For Eternity*, 2017, Mirrored box and LED lights, 86 5/8 x 84 1/4 x 72 7/8 in. photographed by Pablo Enriquez.

My work could thus be better compared to Yayoi Kusama's.⁵³ For instance, in *Longing for Eternity* (2017) [Fig.21] at *The Broad*, only one person can experience the work at a time.⁵⁴ Interior space is viewed through small holes in mirrors. In the room, lights and mirrors create an immersive

experience by filling it entirely. Her work is highly aesthetic and colorful. I found it interesting that the entire piece was devoted to me for the time I spent occupying the physical space. In addition, the time provided to connect with the work rendered it more impressive to me. Much of the interactive art I've experienced engages with many people simultaneously, but I am intrigued by the notion of restricting the sharing of art. This experience, in which I was the sole audience member, prompted me to focus on creating art for individuals. My art is more minimal than Kusama's work, creating a meditative experience to help individuals focus on their private appreciation and situation.

Another source of inspiration arose in the "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" published by Claire Bishop⁵⁵: Here is a "work that is open-ended, interactive, and resistant to closure," often appearing to be a "work-in-progress" rather than a completed object."⁵⁶ She also argued that this would exclude the artist, leaving only the art and obscure the artist's identity. On the contrary, I think the artist's identity does not become blurred but instead expands. When an artist creates a dialogue between their artwork and the viewers to leave it open-ended, it becomes conceptual art beyond the realm of sculpture, performance, installation, public art piece, and social sculpture. In Bourriaud's viewpoint, the era of art, painted on canvas or carved with bronze, has come to an end, and a new era of creating interpersonal relationships has arrived. I strongly feel that an artist works now as a planner or director, not as a craftsman or master. Thus, interaction allows an audience to experience the work in the first person, rather than appreciating artwork in the third person, immersing in the multiple relationships between people and artwork and installation space.

The more I considered how one's experience could affect one's philosophies, the more I began to develop forms that could provide similar audience experiences through my art. I try to

break down boundaries and combine everyday life with art, rather than drawing a separate line between art and life. As Gonzalez-Torres mentioned before, meaning is created once something can be related to individual experiences. Therefore, I want to provide time and space for the audience to enjoy their thought processes to approach the meaning of art and the artist's philosophy beyond intuitive perception.

My interests in multisensory artwork and participation art have affected how I express my intentions in my art. I believe that multisensory experiences and participation art complement each other. Further, I think the interaction between them allows viewers to engage with a more diverse array of feelings. In my work, the various senses act as transitions between each experience. For example, in *Uncomfortable Lullaby 1 (Silent Playhouse)* (2020) [Fig.22], I created the piece using a play tent, stool, pressure sensor with Arduino, and speaker. The black house-shaped tent hangs on the ceiling, and the stool is under the tent. In this installation, the playhouse is small and lets only one viewer enter at a time. In the house, the viewer can observe text installation on its ceiling. When the viewer wants to sit on the stool to read the text more comfortably, the alarm sound is activated. This alarm clock sound is a mundane and familiar sound to people, and it represents my feelings towards my anxiety stemming from my insomnia. This familiar sound can evoke the viewer's empathy about my experience, and the sound transitions the viewers from one experience to another like from my experience to viewer's. It extends the experience beyond a visual one to a sonic one.



[Fig. 22] Younser(Seri) Lee, *Uncomfortable Lullaby 1 (Silent Playhouse)*, 2020, Waterproof Fabric, Stool, Glow-in-dark Sticker, Speaker, Pressure Sensor with Arduino, Mp3 Player, Changeable Installation (The House size: 50 x40 x 50 inch), photographed by the artist



[Fig.23] Younser (Seri) Lee, *To Dream-To Realize*, 2021, Changeable Installation (Clock size: 12x12x2.1 inch, Box size: 42x24x7.5 inch), Clocks, Arduino, Pressure Sensor, Wood box, Electric Cords, Speaker, Mp3 Player, photographed by Richard Sprengeler

In my work, *To Dream-To Realize* (2021) [Fig.23], viewers can hear the sound of multiple clocks ticking in this installation. There is one platform in my installation, and my viewer can stand on it. The platform size is for one person, and this work is also for individual appreciation only. When the viewer steps on the box, the ticking sound stops. However, when the viewer leaves the box, the sound resonates again. I make a sound with the clock ticking in this work, but it was not intended for musically beautiful purposes. I use standard and daily sounds to help viewers to understand the situation in my installation and to get direction to my artwork. These sounds are mundane but make me feel uncomfortable like a clock in Disney's *Peter Pan* affects Captain Hook.⁵⁷ The reason is as those sounds are repeated and come from

multiple directions, they take on the role of awakening inconvenience and focusing on time as a social concept that the audience has taken for granted, if only for a moment.

I consider an installation space for my work as a bowl that includes and gathers my viewers and art. Therefore, through the interactive experience in my work and the transition of experiences through multisensory participation, I hope to provide a meaningful space for the viewer to focus on themselves. In my work, I am posing questions, and my work itself presents a question that I wish to ask the audience based on my own life. In addition, there is no absolute answer to the questions prompted by my artwork. The desired outcome is that the audience engages in self-reflection as a result of experiencing my work.

Conclusion

.. I don't intend to stick to just one state. Although my thoughts are solid, they often change over time actually. There are always questions I ask myself because I want to explore new developments.

- 1. What kind of person am I?*
- 2. What kind of life do I want to live?*
- 3. What should I do?*

The most reliable and believable tool in a dark forest is my feeling, not my smartphone, compass, or map. That's why I have to discover myself first through enough insight. Then, I can ask what now I think myself.

<Artist note, 12. 19. 2020>

My daily life is the basis for my works of art. To expand personal experiences and emotions to the public and create empathy, I create experiences through my works or bring daily objects that anyone can easily understand into the works. Empathic exchange with viewers creates a moment of shared personal experience. I create my approachable artwork and give people the opportunity to participate. I hope my work leads to a humanizing experience.

In reinventing daily objects as art, I can encourage discourse with viewers. This discourse suggests an opportunity to think creatively in people's lives through daily objects. It allows them to ponder the role of art that naturally permeates daily human life and of objects onto which we project symbolic meaning. We coexist with objects, so I have been interested in finding objects and bringing objects to my work. Incorporating familiar objects into my work opens the door to

possibilities for how daily life can become art. For me, the daily object is an attractive material because it can present various symbols and metaphors in art and various interpretations based on one's philosophy or background of life.

To show my thoughts, I manipulate objects using text to rename them in my own way and give them my own meaning. Text can be a method for my viewers to understand expression. The same object is expressed differently from person to person, and the kinds of expressions are countless. Since one object implies the possibility of forming various discourses in various ways, I look forward to its effect as a link between my life and the audience's life.

I explore the possibility of free interpretation through art, considering the ordinary, familiarity, and empathy. Aesthetic values are also crucial in works of art, but I focus on human-to-human interpretation. To create a meaningful place for free conversation through art, I want to relate individuals' daily lives and issues in society to art. The freedom and bond that anyone can participate in and that everyone has no difficulty interpreting. Moreover, I believe this effort will allow me to study unique forms of communication through the experiences of neglected and sacrificed individuals, broadening the spectrum of viewers and therefore interpretations of my work beyond my personal experience and thought.

As an artist, I think about the beginning and the work process, but I do not want to force the ending on the audience. I would like to let their emotions flow naturally through my work. In the future, I will keep creating multisensory-based installation art and thinking about the meaning of space where my art and viewers can meet each other to develop various ways in order to connect human life and art more closely. Consequently, I hope to be an artist who can console people who live in a tired society and need emotional care, creating a space where they can think and take a break.

Endnotes

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² Jim Stone, “5 Sources of Stress and Anxiety in the Modern World.” *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, March 30, 2017. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/clear-organized-and-motivated/201703/5-sources-stress-and-anxiety-in-the-modern-world>.

³ Sigmund Freud, *The Psychoanalytic Movement*, trans. Park, Sung-Su (Seoul: The Open Books Co., 1997), 39

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Psychoanalytic Movement*, 39.

⁵ Edith Kramer is an art therapist who mentioned the healing effects of art.

⁶ Edith Kramer, *Art as Therapy*, trans. Hyun-hoi Kim and Dong-young Lee (Seoul: Sigma Press, 2007), p 44.

⁷ Jessica Stewart, “6 Incredible Facts About the Prehistoric Altamira Cave Paintings,” *My Modern Met*, January 13, 2020, <https://mymodernmet.com/altamira-cave-paintings/>.

⁸ Felix Gonzales-Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)*, 1991, Candies individually wrapped in multicolor cellophane, endless supply, Dimensions vary with installation; ideal weight 175 lbs, Photo: Lise Balsby; Courtesy AROS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Aarhus, Denmark. Art: ©Felix Gonzalez-Torres; Courtesy the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation, accessed April 18, https://www.artnews.com/gallery/art-news/photos/jonathan-katz-coronavirus-aids-crisis-slideshow-1202682577/fgt_2019arosamex1-600b-hr/.

⁹ An American art historian and critical theorist.

¹⁰ Kaja Silverman. *World Spectators*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), p27.

¹¹ Janine Antoni, *Lick and Lather*, 1993, Bust: 24 x 16 x 13”, Pedestal: 45 7/8 x 16”, Installation dimensions: variable, Photographed by Lee Stalworth at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., 1999, accessed April 21, <http://www.janineantoni.net/lick-and-lather>

¹² Rebecca McInerney, “Lick and Lather,” *Art History Perspectives*, accessed April 22, 2021, <https://www.arthistoryperspectives.com/posts/lick-and-lather>.

¹³ I make "Mnemonic Souvenir" based on a mnemonic device.

¹⁴ As quoted in “Janine Antoni,” *Artsy*, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/janine-antoni-lick-and-lather>.

¹⁵ *The Giving Tree* is an American children's picture book written and illustrated by Shel Silverstein.

¹⁶ Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, 1991, Wall clocks and paint on wall. Overall dimensions vary with installation, Original clock size: 14 inches diameter each, Image courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York, accessed April 17, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81074>

¹⁷ “Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*,” MOMA, accessed April 18, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81074>.

¹⁸ Ross Bleckner, “Felix Gonzalez-Torres by Ross Bleckner.” *Bomb*, April 1, 1995, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/felix-gonzalez-torres/>.

¹⁹ Douglas Kellner, “Jean Baudrillard,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, December 18, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ baudrillard/>. According to Kellner, Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) is “associated with the postmodern and poststructuralist theory. His work combines philosophy, social theory, and idiosyncratic cultural metaphysics that reflect on the epoch's key events and phenomena. A sharp critic of contemporary society, culture, and thought, Baudrillard is often seen as a significant guru of French postmodern theory. He can also be read as a thinker who combines social and cultural criticism in original and provocative ways and has developed his style and forms of writing.”

²⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (London: Verso, 2005), 134.

²¹ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 135.

²² Roger Bordier, *L'Art moderne et l'objet*, Translated by Kim, Hyun-su. Seoul: Mijinsa, 1999, p210.

²³ Bernard Marcade, Marcel Duchamp, founder of modern aesthetics, Translated by Kim Gye-young, Byun Kwang-bae, Ko Kwang-sik, (Seoul: Eulyu Cultural History, 2010), p181

²⁴ Alun Davies, “The Industrial Revolution and Time,” Open Learn, August 30, 2019, <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/history-science-technology-and-medicine/history-technology/the-industrial-revolution-and-time>.

²⁵ Alun Davies, “The Industrial Revolution and Time,” Open Learn, August 30, 2019, <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/history-science-technology-and-medicine/history-technology/the-industrial-revolution-and-time>.

²⁶ “Redistribution of Power through the Angbu-ilgu, a Unique Korean Sundial,” Asia Society, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://asiasociety.org/korea/redistribution-power-through-angbu-ilgu-unique-korean-sundial>. For more on Angbu-ilgu (양부일구, 仰釜日晷), see the above article.

²⁷ Alun Davies, “The Industrial Revolution and Time,” Open Learn, August 30, 2019, <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/history-science-technology-and-medicine/history-technology/the-industrial-revolution-and-time>.

²⁸ “MoMA Learning,” MoMA, accessed March 29, 2021, https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/conceptual-art/language-and-art/.

²⁹ “Christine Sun Kim: Trauma, LOL at François Ghebaly,” Artsy, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.artsy.net/show/francois-ghebaly-christine-sun-kim-trauma-lol/info>.

³⁰ Lindsay Preston Zappas, “Drawings that Chart Out the Levels of Deaf Rage,” KCRW, January 19, 2021, <https://www.kcrw.com/culture/articles/art-insider-christine-sun-kim-ian-james-ye-qin-zhu>.

³¹ Christine Sun Kim, *Trauma, LOL*, 2020, Charcoal on paper, 58.25 x 58.25 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and François Ghebaly, Los Angeles. Photo by Paul Salveson, accessed April 27, <https://variablewest.com/tag/christine-sun-kim/>.

³² “Fluxus – Art Term.” Tate. Accessed March 28, 2021, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/fluxus>.

Fluxus is a crucial element in broadening the meaning of art. It has had a profound impact on art production since the 1960s when a various range of art forms. Further, they pursued “art for everyone”.

³³ Owen F. Smith, A Brief History and Other Fictions in the Spirit of Fluxus: Pre-Fluxus Developments and Generative Influences, accessed April 1, 2021, <http://www.thing.net/~grist/ld/smith-fl.htm>.

³⁴ Joseph Beuys, 1982, 7000 Eichen (7000 Oaks), Collaborative Performance, Dimension Variable, accessed April 25, <https://allartisquiteuseful.wordpress.com/2012/10/02/joseph-beuys-7000-oaks/>.

³⁵ Joseph Beuys, “Interview with Joseph Beuys,” in *Joseph Beuys*, Drawings, eds. Simon Randal and Anne Seymour (London and Westerham: Victoria and Albert Museum, Westerham Press, 1983).

³⁶ “Using Multiple Senses to Improve Memory – Discover UNIL.” UNIL. The University of Lausanne, accessed April 27, 2021. <https://wp.unil.ch/discoverunil/2016/11/using-multiple-senses-to-improve-memory/>.

³⁷ “Using Multiple Senses to Improve Memory – Discover UNIL.” UNIL. The University of Lausanne, accessed April 27, 2021. <https://wp.unil.ch/discoverunil/2016/11/using-multiple-senses-to-improve-memory/>.

³⁸ “Author and Public Philosopher.” Roman Krznaric, February 9, 2021. <https://www.romankrznaric.com/about>. Roman Krznaric is a public philosopher who writes about the power of ideas to change society.

³⁹ Roman Krznaric, “Six Habits of Highly Empathic People,” Greater Good. accessed April 1, 2021. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_habits_of_highly_empathic_people1.

⁴⁰ Naomi Rea, “Famed Art Philosopher Nicolas Bourriaud Has Been Ousted From the Museum He Founded in Favor of a More Populist Replacement,” Artnet News, Artnet News, March 25, 2021. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/nicolas-bourriaud-ousted-montpellier-1953926>. Nicolas Bourriaud is the French writer and curator, who co-founded the Palais de Tokyo in Paris.

⁴¹ Nicolas Bourriaud, Essay. In *Nicolas Bourriaud: Relational Aesthetics*, (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2002), p113.

⁴² Nicolas Bourriaud, Nicolas. Essay. In *Nicolas Bourriaud: Relational Aesthetics*, p28.

⁴³ Stewart Martin, “Critique of Relational Aesthetics.” *Third Text* 21, no. 4 (2007): 371.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820701433323>.

⁴⁴ “Rirkrit Tiravanija.” Rirkrit Tiravanija - 111 Artworks, Bio & Shows on Artsy. accessed April 27, 2021. <https://www.artsy.net/artist/rirkrit-tiravanija>. Using human interaction as his primary material, Rirkrit Tiravanija goes beyond performance to create socially-engaged conceptual works that blur the boundaries of art in novel ways and bridge the division between public and private.

⁴⁵ “Rirkrit Tiravanija. Untitled (Free/Still). 1992/1995/2007/2011-: MoMA.” The Museum of Modern Art. Accessed April 26, 2021. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/147206>.

⁴⁶ Rirkrit Tiravanija. *Untitled*, 1992. Refrigerator, table, chairs, wood, drywall, food and other materials, Dimensions variable. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eli Wallach (by exchange), accessed April 25, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/147206>.

⁴⁷ “Untitled 2002 (He Promised).” The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation. accessed April 26, 2021. <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/13481>.

⁴⁸ “Mieko Shiomi.” AWARE Women artists / Femmes artistes. accessed April 27, 2021. <https://awarewomenartists.com/en/artiste/mieko-shiomi/>. Mieko Shiomi is Japanese composer, visual artist, and poet. She deepened her exploration of spatial-temporal music in relation to everyday objects.

⁴⁹ Mieko Shiomi, *Shadow Piece*, 1963, 6 7/8 x 9" (17.5 x 22.8 cm), Ink on Paper, accessed by April 27, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/127555>.

⁵⁰ Rebecca Stokes, “MoMA: Rirkrit Tiravanija: Cooking Up an Art Experience.” InsideOut. accessed April 20, 2021. https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2012/02/03/rirkrit-tiravanija-cooking-up-an-art-experience/.

⁵¹ “Olafur Eliasson.” Art21. accessed April 26, 2021. https://art21.org/artist/olafur-eliasson/?gclid=CjwKCAjw7J6EBhBDEiwA5UUM2tTBNZ_FQH9IoAk0aSrviWM8GzbGN7gx5Nh6-7aaOK0iV7lBVGO9PhoCBm8QAvD_BwE. Moving seamlessly from his early photographs to sculpture, immersive environments, large-scale public interventions, and architectural projects, Eliasson uses simple natural elements—light, color, water, and movement—to alter viewers’ sensory perceptions. Predicated on the idea that “art does not end where the real world begins,” Eliasson’s work lives in the active exchange between his creations and the viewers.

⁵² Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, 2003, Monofrequency lights, projection foil, haze machines, mirror foil, aluminium, and scaffolding, 26.7 m x 22.3 m x 155.4 m, Photography by Tate Photographer (Andrew Dunkley & Marcus Leith), accessed April 2, <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/exhibition/EXH101069/the-weather-project>.

⁵³ “Yayoi Kusama.” Yayoi Kusama | Whitney Museum of American Art. accessed April 2, 2021. <https://whitney.org/exhibitions/yayoi-kusama>. Well known for her use of dense patterns of polka dots and nets, as well as her intense, large-scale environments, Yayoi Kusama works in a variety of media, including painting, drawing, sculpture, film, performance, and immersive installation.

⁵⁴ Yayoi Kusama, *Longing For Eternity*, 2017, Mirrored box and LED lights, 86 5/8 x 84 1/4 x 72 7/8 in. Photo by Pablo Enriquez, accessed April 24, <https://www.thebroad.org/art/yayoi-kusama/longing-eternity>.

⁵⁶ Claire Bishop, *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p.52

⁵⁷ “Tick-Tock the Crocodile.” Disney Wiki. accessed March 29, 2021. https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Tick-Tock_the_Crocodile. In Disney animation, *Peter Pan* (1953), there is a crocodile. Although the crocodile swallowed Captain Hook's hand, now it follows him around to eat the rest of him. In this process, the crocodile also swallowed Hook's tick-tock clock, which will make everyone know of its presence. Thus, whenever the crocodile comes to Hook, he shivers with fear because of the ticking sound from the crocodile's stomach. This crocodile is called Tick-Tock the Crocodile.

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